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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: OCTOBER 27, 2008

Summary: Prime Minister Gilani's statement terming the U.S. raids as "disastrous" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. Also front paged were reports that the "U.S. spy drones fired missiles in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan, killing seven people." Newspapers also reported that "younger brother of Baitullah Mehsud was killed by armed men." Reports on the killing of "11 militants by security forces during operations in Bajaur Agency" also figured prominently. All newspapers also front paged reports that "10 troops were killed in a suicide attack in Mohmand Agency."

Different themes prevailed on the editorial pages with most major dailies opting to comment on the local political developments. The English newspaper, "Daily Times," noted that "there is a dire need for the generation of a local economy to remove reliance on smuggling. In some ways the local tribes are dependent for their incomes today on the "foreigners" brought in by Al Qaeda. The Al Qaeda economy must be replaced by Bajaur's own, brought in by the state agencies from outside with the help of the international community." The liberal Urdu daily, "Express," wrote: "The message hidden in the attack is that America does not want a change in the war on terror policy of former president Pervez Musharraf." The second-largest Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" commenting on the violation of Pakistan's territory by U.S. drones observed that "would not Pakistan Army retaliate if India followed the pattern of U.S. or NATO attacks and attacked Azad Kashmir or Pakistan territory just because it had not been authorized by the government? America would not stop the attacks unless given effective response." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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11. "Gilani Terms U.S. Raids Disastrous" "Dawn" (10/27)

"U.S. attacks in tribal areas are harming the government's efforts to isolate extremists and mobilize people against militancy, according to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani. Addressing a press conference after returning from Beijing on Sunday, the prime minister criticized the Inspector-General of the Frontier Corps for saying that the military operation in Bajaur Agency might last another year, asserting that any decision about the timing of the army's withdrawal from tribal areas would be taken by his government."

12. "Suspected U.S. Strike Kills Seven" "Dawn" (10/27)

"Suspected U.S. spy drones fired missiles on Sunday into an alleged militant compound in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan, killing at least seven people, security officials said."

13. "Qazi Warns Of Separatism In Tribal Areas" "The News" (10/27)

"Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Qazi Hussain Ahmad has warned that the operation in tribal areas was creating a separatist movement, which may lead to another disintegration of the country."

¶4. "Military Operation An Insult To Parliament, Says Fazl" "The News" (10/27)

"The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, has said military operation in the tribal areas and non-implementation of unanimous resolution adopted by the Parliament is an insult to the Parliament."

¶5. "Baitullah's Brother Killed" "Dawn" (10/27)

"A younger brother of Baitullah Mehsud, the Chief of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, was killed by armed men in Bannu on Sunday morning."

¶6. "11 Militants Killed In Bajaur" "Dawn" (10/27)

"At least 11 militants were killed and six others injured by security forces during Operation Sherdil in different parts of Bajaur Agency on Sunday."

¶7. "10 Troops Killed In Mohmand Suicide Attack" "The News" (10/27)

"A suicide bomber blew up an explosives-laden vehicle late Sunday at a paramilitary check-post in the northwest Mohmand Agency, killing 10 and injuring five security force personnel, Geo TV quoted security officials as saying."

¶8. "Tribesmen Stand Up To Taliban; Lose 12, Kill 7" "Dawn" (10/27)

"Twelve Jirga members were executed and seven militants, including commander Mulla Shamsher, were killed in fighting between a tribal force and militants loyal to radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah in Swat valley on Sunday."

¶9. "Pak-Afghan Mini Jirga Begins Today" "The News" (10/27)

"The Pak-Afghan Mini Jirga is set to begin today (Monday) in Islamabad, which would be attended by representatives from all the political parties of both the countries."

¶10. "Arrested American Is A 'School Dropout'" "The News" (10/27)

"The American youth arrested by security forces while entering Mohmand Agency on October 13 is a high school dropout, who preferred to settle back in Pakistan after failing to find a better career in the U.S., sources told 'The News.'"

¶11. "President to Leave For U.S. On November 10" "The Post" (10/27)

"President Asif Ali Zardari will leave for U.S. on November 10, where he will attend the inter-religious conference scheduled at the UN Headquarters. It is likely that the U.S. President, George W. Bush will also be attending this meeting."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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¶12. "Bajaur: An Interim Assessment," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/27)

"There is a dire need for the generation of a local economy to remove reliance on smuggling. This is the aspect of the problem that has not been looked at before. In some ways the local tribes are dependent for their incomes today on the "foreigners" brought in by Al Qaeda. The Al Qaeda economy must be replaced by Bajaur's own, brought in by the state agencies from outside with the help of the international community."

¶13. "Preparation Of Operation In Mohmand Agency After Bajaur," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (10/27)

"Pakistan having been declared as battle field by President Bush made it clear that efforts were afoot to destabilize it. U.S. military attacks inside Pakistan are aimed at the objective. Consider U.S. attitude; it launched missile strikes on Pakistan only six hours after its parliament passed resolution vis-à-vis the war against terrorism. The message hidden in the attack is that America does not want a change in the war on terror policy of former president Pervez Musharraf.... It is better for the militants to surrender and be prepared for talks. This is the way out of the current bloodshed. Otherwise foreign forces want to destabilize Pakistan to attain their nefarious objectives."

¶14. "Constant Violation Of Airspace: Pak Army Should Fulfill Defense Obligation," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (10/27)

"Would not Pakistan Army retaliate if India followed the pattern of U.S. or NATO attacks and attacked Azad Kashmir or Pak territory just because it had not been authorized by the government? America would not stop the attacks and giving patronage to Indo-Afghan conspiracies unless given effective response.... Pakistan Army should prove that it is ever vigilant and will not disappoint the nation."

¶15. "Operation Continues Even After The Resolution," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/27)

"The gains of the security forces in Bajaur are appreciable as they have captured stronghold of militants and this would have salutary impact on the overall situation in FATA. Yet worrisome to note is that even those spearheading the campaign against terror are talking about continuation of the operation for over one year. This speaks volumes about the ground situation and calls for measures on war footing that could lead to early winding up of the operation."

¶16. "Break With The Past," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/27)

"Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani's observation that the Army is bound to follow decisions of Parliament represents a welcome departure from the past when those nursing Bonapartist notions were not only reluctant to obey the civilian authorities, but had also been instrumental in the sacking of elected governments... General Kayani's comment comes on the heels of Parliament's resolution on terrorism.... It should be satisfying for the democratic leadership to see the military top brass endorse its policies and express readiness to execute them without seeking a role in the decision-making process."

¶17. "Parliament Resolution implementation," an op-ed by M. Ashraf Mirza in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/27)

"The Drones' attacks still persist with no let up whatsoever apparently because there may be an element of truth in the U.S. contention that it's being done with Islamabad's passive approval.... There can hardly be two opinions about the fact that the US cannot fight its war on terror without Pakistan's military and logistical support. Yet we are at the receiving end.... The present government is obviously in a better position to talk plainly and firmly to Washington on the national interests."

¶18. "What Went Wrong In Afghanistan?," an op-ed by Nauman Asghar in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (10/27)

"The U.S. must admit the fact that in the absence of political reconciliation and without bringing poppy cultivation under control, the task of restoring peace and normalcy to the war-ravaged country would be a fool's errand."